

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 001800

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [PREL](#) [CI](#) [CODEL](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL COLEMAN MEETS WITH EDUCATION MINISTER BITAR

REF: SANTIAGO 1745

1. CODEL Coleman (SFRC Western Hemisphere Chairman Senator Coleman and Senator Martinez and Representative Miller) met with Chilean Education Minister Sergio Bitar in the Minister's office on Thursday, August 25. Ambassador Kelly, DCM Yamauchi, and members of the respective staffs were present.

2. Senator Coleman asked Minister Bitar about Chile's plans to improve education, particularly with regard to English language instruction. The Minister responded that the pace of technological change was creating the need for an increasingly educated population. As a result, education for the first time was moving to the forefront of the Chilean Government's agenda. He noted that the government had taken on the teacher's unions and pointed to newly created teacher competency testing programs. The Minister stated that the Chilean government has a series of priorities -- health care reform, justice reform as well as infrastructure and telecommunications improvements - that all require a level of English proficiency. He hoped that most students would speak English in ten years, but added that Chile would need volunteer teachers from outside the country to help achieve this goal.

3. Senator Coleman noted his subcommittee oversees the Peace Corps, and that the "Peace Corps represents the best face of the American People." He promised to speak to Director Vasquez to support the ongoing bilateral discussions leading toward a return of the Peace Corps to Chile to teach English. Senator Martinez added that he, too, was thrilled by Minister Bitar's vision of a bilingual Chile and observed that the United States is itself an increasingly bilingual country. Representative Miller added his thanks to the Minister for the commitment to English and for his bold move to challenge Chile's teacher's unions. The Minister thanked the CODEL for its support for a Peace Corps presence in Chile and concluded the meeting with his thoughts on parental involvement in the educational process.

4. CODEL Coleman did not have the opportunity to review this cable before leaving Santiago.

Kelly